DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 413 720 EC 305 994

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|---|---|
| AUTHOR | Bates, Belinda, Ed. |
| TITLE | Transitions: Issues for the Adult Learner with Learning Disabilities. |
| INSTITUTION | National Adult Literacy and Learning Disabilities Center, Washington, DC. |
| SPONS AGENCY | National Inst. on Disability and Rehabilitation Research (ED/OSERS), Washington, DC. |
| PUB DATE | 1997-00-00 |
| NOTE | 21p. |
| AVAILABLE FROM | Academy for Educational Development, National ALLD Center, 1875 Connecticut Ave., N.W. 9th Floor, Washington, DC 20009-1202; 202-884-8185; toll-free: 800-953-2553; fax: 202-884-8422. |
| PUB TYPE | Collected Works - Serials (022) -- Guides - Non-Classroom (055) |
| JOURNAL CIT | LINKAGES, Linking Literacy & Learning Disabilities; v4 n1 Spr 1997 |
| EDRS PRICE | MF01/PC01 Plus Postage. |
| DESCRIPTORS | Adolescents; *Adult Literacy; Adult Students; College Bound Students; *Education Work Relationship; Educational Objectives; *Employment Programs; Higher Education; *Learning Disabilities; Problem Solving; Self Advocacy; *Skill Development; *Transitional Programs; Work Environment |

ABSTRACT

This issue of "Linkages" addresses the need for adult literacy programs to go beyond teaching basic academic skills to adults with learning disabilities to teaching skills in goal setting, problem solving, and self-advocacy that will assist adult learners in their transition into the workforce. Articles include: "Transition: Adult Literacy and Learning Disabilities" (Craig A. Michaels), which urges practitioners to reconceptualize the instructional focus on remediation and to address accommodation and compensatory strategies simultaneously, thus enabling students with learning disabilities to succeed; "A Chance To Be Included" (Helen K. Bosch), which describes community inclusion instruction that involves teaching basic skills, management skills, and relationship skills; "Transition: From Pain to Aide" (Tracy S.), the story of an adult with learning disabilities; "Transition to College" (Anne Reamer), discusses strategies for college-bound individuals with learning disabilities; "Transition to Work" (Arlyn Roffman), provides tips for helping adults with learning disabilities make the transition to the workplace; "Developing Workplace Skills" (Robert Crawford), describes the Life Development Institute (LDI), a community-based program that assists individuals with learning disabilities in gaining workplace skills; and "Working toward Independence" (Grant Rayburn), a personal narrative of an individual who participated in LDI. The newsletter includes a list of resource organizations and selected readings. (CR)

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LINKAGES
Linking Literacy & Learning Disabilities
Spring 1997
Vol. 4, No. 1

NATIONAL ADULT LITERACY AND LEARNING DISABILITIES CENTER
A PROGRAM OF THE NATIONAL INSTITUTE FOR LITERACY

## FROM THE DIRECTOR . . .

The literature on adult development speaks to the transitions that all individuals must make to be fully functioning members of society. These transitions necessarily involve the evolution from adolescence, with its dependence on others, to adulthood and increasing autonomy. We expect that persons graduating from high school will take the lead in negotiating their own transitions to the world of work or to postsecondary education and, ultimately, to independent living. And we understand that, along the way, the individual may make one or more transitions — from one school to another, from school to work, from one job to another, and from one home to another.

For most of us, life's transitions can be challenging and anxiety-producing, because they force us into new worlds where we must learn new skills and new behaviors and even become fluent with new cultural norms. For individuals with learning disabilities, however, this transition process can be overwhelming. They may lack not only basic academic skills but also goal setting skills and social skills necessary for successful transitions. The consequences of making unsuccessful life transitions can be staggering, ranging from failure to obtain meaningful employment and economic security to a lifetime of diminished self-esteem and fear of failure.

Successful adult literacy programs address the unique needs of adults with learning disabilities. By teaching more than basic academic skills and by helping students develop skills in goal setting, problem solving, and self-advocacy, literacy practitioners encourage their students to become successful and fully functioning members of society. We hope that this newsletter is helpful to program administrators and teachers in considering the special needs of adults with learning disabilities and in planning services that are both effective and responsive to this population.

- Mary Ann Corley, Ph.D

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# TRANSITIONS: ISSUES FOR THE ADULT LEARNER WITH LEARNING DISABILITIES

## TRANSITION: ADULT LITERACY AND LEARNING DISABILITIES

*by Craig A. Michaels, Ph.D.*

In programmatically planning for the transition of students with learning disabilities from school to adult life, we frequently commit two significant oversights. First, we tend to simplify the transition process in our quest for an immediate transition outcome. While we strive to create strategies to assist adults with learning disabilities in moving from a given point A (e.g., secondary education) to a given point B (e.g., postsecondary education or employment), we must make space and time for **the process** and the stops along the way at points Z, Q, D, H, and K. More importantly, we must see these side stops as necessary and valuable learning experiences and communicate this to the adults we serve. In the process of promoting competency, self-determination, and self-actualization, these side stops must not be viewed as mistakes or failures, but as transitions in themselves.

The second oversight is more insidious and short-sighted. Our transition efforts focus solely on changes within the individual. Implicit within

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this approach is that the world around us is stable rather than rapidly changing. This second oversight is equivalent to an astronomer who is concerned only with the rotation of the earth on its axis while completely ignoring the effects of the revolution of the earth around the sun! This article will examine the implications of this second transition oversight within the context of literacy and learning disabilities and offer challenges to develop instructional strategies to help redefine adult literacy education for the 21st century.

***As the information superhighway becomes a day-to-day reality in our lives, we can be assured that our students will need to learn from and process information in a variety of ever-changing ways.***

As the information superhighway becomes a day-to-day reality in our lives, we can be assured that our students will need to learn from and process information in a variety of ever-changing ways. We have only to look at the changes over the last decade to gain a sense of this future. We know that literacy "involves an individual's ability to function on the job and in society and to develop one's knowledge and potential."[1] Literacy also includes skills in reading, interpreting, and using a broad variety of electronic text materials, such as E-mail, Internet, and on-line interactive instructions that were virtually unknown a few years ago.

Bill Gates predicts "the information highway will transform our culture as dramatically as Gutenberg's press did the Middle Ages."[2] Within the context of redefining adult literacy, this transformation of culture will be brought about primarily by an increased availability of information and an increased demand to process information (i.e., literacy skills).

We need to ensure that the focus of our transition efforts is grounded firmly in creating lifelong learners who can engage in the process of transition by adapting in a changing world of information and technology. A number of federal initiatives, including Goals 2000, the School-to-Work Opportunities Act of 1994 (P.L. 103-239), and the Secretary's Commission on Achieving Necessary Skills (SCANS), recognize our changing world and call on us to revise our transition efforts to promote lifelong learners who can:

- think creatively;
- make decisions;
- problem solve;
- see things in the mind's eye;
- organize and maintain information;
- synthesize information;
- interpret and communicate information; and
- use a variety of technologies to process information.

Unfortunately, many of these competencies are the same activities that elicit anxiety and learned helplessness in persons with learning disabilities. When applied to "traditional" literacy, these skills fall into the general category that we loosely refer to as "comprehension skills." From a developmental perspective, we find that many early reading problems of children with learning disabilities that can be viewed as perceptual in nature (decoding problems) later

give way to problems that may be considered conceptual in nature (comprehension problems).

Professionally, we have been most successful in developing remedial methods to address reading fluency–decoding/word attack skills and word recognition–but often this success has been at the expense of reading competency–interest, perceived competency, and comprehension. Our creativity truly will be tapped as we move towards the 21st century and begin to develop instructional strategies that will help to redefine adult literacy and promote competency/efficacy in adults with learning disabilities.

Technology often is described as holding the potential to be the great equalizer for people with disabilities, and enough anecdotal information is available to point to the potential implications of emerging technology for persons with learning disabilities. But without the literacy skills and the "know-how to adapt to their ever-changing environment, adults with learning disabilities will be left behind."[3] As you proactively prepare students for transition and to meet the literacy demands of the 21st century, I invite you to consider the following ideas:

***Technology often is described as holding the potential to be the great equalizer for people with disabilities.***

- *Reconceptualize our instructional focus on remediation to address accommodation and compensation strategies simultaneously to enable adults with learning disabilities to succeed.* For example, while pursuing traditional remedial reading strategies, a student also may use recorded versions of text to keep up with other learners in the mastery of content knowledge. This approach promotes personal competency and reading efficacy while maintaining commitment among adults with learning disabilities to engage in the remediation process.
- *Do not assume comprehension based on an ability to decode, especially with electronic forms of text materials.* The fact that a student physically can read material should in no way indicate that the student understands or can follow through on the tasks the material describes. Meaningful literacy skills include a demonstration of true comprehension. Just because I can process the words of the income tax form, for example, in no way should imply that I can understand and/or fill out my own tax return.
- *Teach for skill mastery, transfer, and generalization.* Skill mastery, transfer, and generalization must be built into the instructional process and tied into the adult learner's conscious commitment to use a given strategy based upon his/her understanding of the purpose/value of the skill to his/her life.
- *Build computer literacy into the instructional approach.* Our students need to learn to gather and process information from a variety of on-line services and to create documents that are formatted to look neat, are logically sequenced, are grammatically correct, and have a minimum of spelling errors.
- *Focus on strategic approaches to problem solving and information manipulation--identification, storage, retrieval, utilization.* As we realize there is no way to teach our stu-


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dents what to do in each situation they might face in the future, we must instead teach them how to engage in strategic problem solving. Successful problem solving will be tied directly to the individual's ability to manipulate and use information from multiple sources.

- *Believe in your students.* Within transition planning, there is a focus on the development of "realistic goals." Unfortunately, this focus inadvertently may not encourage students with learning disabilities to strive to reach for their dreams. As a society, we do not tend to cultivate the hopes and perseverance of students with learning disabilities in the same ways we do for their couterparts without disabilities. This lack of encouragement frequently leads to low self-esteem, lack of self-confidence, and general feelings of hopelessness.

***We are responsible for instilling within each of our students a sense of hope and optimism in the future.***

- *Believe in the future.* Most of all, we are responsible for instilling within each of our students a sense of hope and optimism in the future. We must empower our students by giving them a sense of purpose, self-efficacy, and the personal competency to make a meaningful contribution to our collective future.

The implementation of these suggestions also will get to the heart of the first transition oversight, which I described as a tendency to have a limited focus on outcome rather than process. By equipping adults with learning disabilities with the literacy skills necessary to engage actively in the lifelong learning process, we ultimately will be assuring that we are facilitating a truly meaningful transition outcome that helps our students become capable of meeting the challenges of living and participating fully in the 21st century. ❖

[1]*Sturomski, N. A. (1996a). Building bridges. In S. C. Cramer & W. Ellis (Eds.), Learning disabilities - Lifelong issues (pp. 165-170). Baltimore: Paul H. Brookes Publishing Company.*

[2]*Gates, B. (1995). The road ahead. New York: Viking.*

[3]*Sturomski, N. A. (1996b). Literacy needs for adults who have learning disabilities. In N. Gregg, C. Hoy, & A. F. Gay (Eds.), Adults with learning disabilities - Theoretical and practical perspectives (pp. 261-276). New York: Guilford Press.*

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# A Chance To Be Included

***By Helen K. Bosch, M.S.***

James, a 40-year-old college graduate from an upper middle class, college-educated family, has excellent verbal skills and an above average IQ. Statistically, James should have a wife, children, and successful employment in a middle management position. James, however, has just begun an entry-level clerical position after being unemployed for several years. He is not married and, until recently, required continued support from his aging parents to live in an apartment they owned. James hasn't been able to achieve his life goals, because he has a learning disability.

Oftentimes, academic success is seen as the key to work and independence. Yet, to be truly included in a community, we must be involved in productive activities, such as working, managing our homes, and developing relationships with friends, family, and neighbors. These aspects of our lives help us to feel complete, worthwhile, and valued and are imperative to a positive sense of self. Although the need for a solid academic foundation should not be minimized, adults with learning disabilities need specific instruction on how to be included in their communities.

Most young adults begin their careers, establish homes, and make friends through a natural developmental process that begins in adolescence. However, young adults with learning disabilities often are unable to develop the skills necessary to attain these basic human desires without intervention or direct instruction coupled with experience.

Although this may not apply to all persons with learning disabilities, there is a growing realization that many young adults with learning disabilities will need specific instruction to achieve the community inclusion we take for granted. Community inclusion instruction involves a three-step approach:

- basic skills;
- management skills; and
- relationship skills.

*Basic Skills* are the concrete and measurable skills of daily living which are essential to the survival of the individual. Most adults have not perfected each and every basic skill but have mastered them well enough to function in society. There are five major skill areas: money concepts, meal preparation, household activities, self-care, and time concepts.

Most elementary and secondary schools teach basic skills, including telling time, recognizing money values, making change and paying for items, cooking, and cleaning. Parents teach children how to respond in an emergency, maintain cleanliness, and take routine medications. Mastering these skills requires practice. As young adults move away from home, they are forced to practice in order to survive. Personal services such as housekeeping or prepared food can be purchased to compensate for a lack of a specific skill. Therefore, most adults can meet their basic needs.

While adults with learning disabilities generally master the basic skills, they encounter greater difficulty at the management level. *Management Skills* involve the ability to organize

and prioritize activities, plan ahead, set goals, and create action steps to achieve goals. Every basic skill area has an associated management skill:

- *Money Management* - the ability to budget money, resist impulsive spending, save, and meet financial obligations in a timely manner;
- *Food Management* - the ability to plan what one will eat, know which ingredients to purchase, and organize cooking times;
- *Household Management* - the ability to keep a home organized, clean, and in good repair through preventative activities;
- *Self-Management* - the ability to plan and follow through on healthy and positive activities, care for one's body, access medical and self-care resources, and know how to handle emergencies; and
- *Time Management* - the ability to estimate time, create a schedule by planning ahead and prioritizing activities so responsibilities do not conflict, and meet obligations in a timely manner.

These skills require abstract reasoning and the ability to organize and plan ahead. Often, adults with learning disabilities have not mastered these more complex abilities. They need to be taught theoretically, and given structured opportunities to practice the skill with support. Systems that provide a structure for the adult to learn and follow also may need to be created. For example, learning how to schedule one's time may seem overwhelming when given a blank appointment book and an unlimited time frame. Time management can be taught successfully if the time period and activities to be assigned within that period are identified. Once the structure is in place, the individual then can be taught organizational and planning skills using real life experiences.

Often, the most important aspect of community inclusion is the person's ability to relate to the world. *Relationship Skills* include social skills, coping skills, and empathic skills. Social skills are the ability to understand social rules for specific situations and then act accordingly. Much like basic skills, social skills are concrete behaviors that cultures have determined as appropriate for specific situations. For example, the social rules for how to behave at a funeral will be different from those at a baseball game.

Most situations are not easily defined by specific social rules. Decisions must be based on specific circumstances and nuances of the situation. For many adults with learning disabilities, this is an area of great difficulty. Perceptual disabilities affect the individual's ability to interpret the situation and to behave correctly. Adults with learning disabilities do best when they have learned a set of coping skills they can apply to a variety of situations. Coping skills include techniques such as how to make a decision; what to do when one does not know what to do; how to

***To be truly included in a community, we must be involved in productive activities, such as working, managing our home, and developing relationships.***



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be assertive; and how to resolve conflict. Having structured general responses that can be applied to a variety of day-to-day experiences can free up the individual from having to depend on others to interpret the situations and provide responses. We all develop a level of coping techniques through trial and error in our daily lives. Individuals with learning disabilities often require consistent training to understand and master these techniques.

The final and most complex component is the ability to understand and form a variety of relationships. We have relationships with our families, friends, neighbors, employers, bank tellers, and barbers. The depth, quality, and length of each relationship varies, and with each come different emotional and behavioral requirements. The ability to form relationships requires individuals to look beyond themselves and recognize the needs of others: the development of empathic skills. Empathy is essential to forming mutual long-term friendships and bonds. This is a skill that must be developed outside of the family structure. One must be an active part of the world in order to learn how to truly relate to the world.

Relationship skills often are the key factor in successful community inclusion. This ability to understand social rules, use a variety of complex behaviors, and develop trusting and mutual relationships is key to success in work and independence, yet this area often is most ignored. Individuals require instruction and constructive feedback in this area if they are to be successful in the world.

Ask soon-to-be graduates with learning disabilities what they want from life. Their response often is a good job; a car; a girl/boy friend; to live on their own. Their dreams are our dreams.

They can achieve these dreams if they are given the opportunity to learn the necessary skills, both conceptually and through experience.

***Community inclusion instruction involves a three-step approach:***

- ***basic skills;***
- ***management skills; and***
- ***relationship skills.***

It is the role of family members, professionals in the field, and those who care about these individuals to ensure that the opportunities exist. ❖

***Helen K. Bosch, M.S.,*** *is Executive Director of VISTA of Westbrook, Inc. This private, nonprofit, postsecondary training program serves adults with learning disabilities and head injuries. She also has held the post of President of the Board of Directors for the Connecticut Association for Children with Learning Disabilities.*

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## Transition: From Pain to Aide

***By Tracy S.***

School was really tough for me. First, I was put in a class for slow learners, which meant they put me in a room and told me to do my schoolwork. It didn't help; I was kind of just pushed along. Later, I was placed in a different elementary school where I was in a slow learner class for certain subjects and mainstreamed for others. Again, they would just tell me to do my work. But how can a person do her work if she can't read it? I slid through my elementary school years.

When I got to junior high school, I really didn't want to go. Not knowing how to read or what I was supposed to do was really embarrassing. I would take an "F" before trying to write a paper or book report. I just couldn't do it; I didn't know how or what to do. I was again shuffled through. Embarrassment was my biggest memory in my high school years. When I left school in the eleventh grade, I did not know what I was going to do. Back then, most people got married out of high school, so that became my plan. I would raise a family and be a stay-at-home mom. If I had to get a job, I thought I could do factory work.

I worked in several factories, because I didn't need to read to do those jobs. Later, I got married and began a family. I was getting along okay and continued to hide my reading and writing difficulties. I really did think I was stupid. The turning point for me began one day when I was grocery shopping. On the grocery bags was the message: *If you want to learn how to read, you can do it.* There was an 800 number to call for help. I wanted to stop hiding, so I decided to call. The number was to a national literacy organization. Because I live in a rural location, the national organization could not refer me to help close to where I live. My sister encouraged me to call the closest college for additional information. The college put me in contact with a county literacy program. I was scared, but I took the first step and gave it a try anyway.

Several times during my years of receiving literacy tutoring, I could have easily given up. It was hard trying to improve my reading and writing skills. More than once, I came home in tears; it seemed too hard. The people in the literacy program were so patient and kind, and they made me stick with it. For example, it was my tutor who helped me find my next step toward learning to read. She suggested that I be assessed for a learning disability to see if there was something else we could do to make learning less of a rocky road.

I was tested by the Learning Disabilities Association. On the day of the test, I felt scared and embarrassed. I had never done well on tests and could have easily gotten up and walked out several times because of frustration. But I stayed anyway and tried my best. The results of the testing showed that I was not stupid; that I could learn, but that I had a learning disability. My learning disability meant that I had to learn in a different way, using lots of review. My tutor was given several ideas to help me meet my goals of learning to read and write.

My tutor was the main thing that got me through. She was there to comfort, teach, and support me when I was down and to kick me in

the butt when I needed it. Had I been assigned a different tutor, I might not have stuck with it – we were a perfect match. Changing my confidence and skill levels was a slow process. In the beginning, I couldn't do it, but then determination set in, and I would do it. There were steps forward and slides backward, but I kept my vision on moving ahead and pushing forward. The more positive you can remain, the better you weather the hard times. There were times I would say, "I can't do this." My son would say, "Oh, Mom, you can, too! Remember what you used to tell me when I had trouble with school? You used to say, 'You can do this!'" I don't know where I got the strength to tell my kids they could do things when I couldn't. I now know that, with determination and practice, you can do all the things you try. My son would help me with my assignments, and my husband was also very supportive.

***I saw what I had accomplished, and I realized I could do it. The struggle would continue to be there at times, but if I had learned this much, I could learn more. And I did.***

My self-esteem was so low that it took a long time and a great deal of support to build my confidence. After a long time of moving forward, I glanced back at old books and assignments I had finished. I saw what I had accomplished, and I realized I could do it. The struggle would continue to be there at times, but if I had learned this much, I could learn more. And I did. I can see how easy it would have been, at times, to give it up, and I can see how others want to give up. But you have to stick with it. It is worth it.

I remember when my Parent Teacher Association asked me to be the treasurer. I first thought, "I can't do that," but then thought, "Why not?" Years earlier, it would have been a straight out, "No way!" I did well as treasurer. The next year, I became the president of the PTA. It was a job I never would have attempted had I not greatly improved my reading and writing skills and my self-confidence. Today, I am employed in the school system as a substitute elementary school aide, and I continue to be involved in my community. I am working in the one place that caused me the most pain. Maybe I can keep another child from feeling like it is impossible to learn to read. I have been there and know that it is possible.

I now read a lot of books, and I am really content in my life. My life is so much different, so much better than it used to be. People say that reading can open another world, and I really believe that is true, because I have experienced it. Anything I choose to do, I can do. ❖

***Tracy S.*** *is a rural Wisconsin housewife and mother who works part-time as a school aide.*

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# Transition To College

***By Anne Reamer***

Successful college students with learning disabilities, college advisors, and campus Disability Support Services (DSS) staff agree that developing knowledge about the nature of one's learning disabilities and one's personal and academic strengths and weaknesses is vital for successful transition to postsecondary education. The vehicle for this understanding is professional documentation of the learning disabilities. A qualified professional, such as a school psychologist or educational diagnostician, provides a written diagnosis of the specific learning disability and makes recommendations for accommodations that will help the student meet with academic success. It is essential that each student have a full and frank discussion about this documentation with the expert who has made the assessment.

College-bound students with learning disabilities should make themselves aware of the general categories of postsecondary educational institutions. There are over 3,000 colleges and universities in the United States, varying in size, scope of program offered, setting (urban, suburban, or rural, and residential or commuter), and cost of attendance.

Open admissions colleges admit anyone over age 18 or with a high school diploma and may be two-year or four-year programs. Applicants to selective admissions colleges must meet the criteria set by each school.

Adults with learning disabilities need to have an accurate idea of the strengths they have to offer colleges as well as the academic requirements and admission procedures of the institutions to which they plan to apply. Colleges and universities may not require disclosure of disabilities in the admissions process. However, students who decide to disclose their disability should begin the college application process as early as possible to allow the school adequate time to review the documentation of the learning disabilities and to plan for the necessary accommodative services.

The disclosure of a learning disability may not be used by colleges and universities as a basis for denying admission. The Rehabilitation Act of 1973, P.L. 93-112 (especially Section 504), and the Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990 (ADA), P.L. 101-336, protect the civil rights of people with disabilities and require postsecondary institutions to provide reasonable, timely, and effective accommodative services. The Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act of 1974 (FERPA), P.L. 93-380, protects the confidentiality of student records. Disability-related information should be kept in separate, single-source files with access limited to appropriate personnel.

Once in college, the student holds the responsibility for self-identification and self-advocacy. To be a self-advocate, each student must learn to understand his or her particular type of learning disability, the resultant academic strengths and weaknesses, and his or her individual learning style. Most importantly, persons with learning disabilities need to become comfortable describing to others both the disability and their academic needs.

Hundreds of colleges and universities have comprehensive programs especially designed for students with learning disabilities. Staffed by trained professionals, these programs offer services beyond those required by law for making programs accessible. Many colleges and universities levy additional charges above the tuition fee for these supplementary services, but accommodations required under Section 504 and ADA are provided at no cost. Students who wish to learn more about such programs should either contact the colleges and universities in which they are interested or check one of the many college guidebooks that contain listings of, and information about, such programs.

Accommodative services are essential to the success of many students with learning disabilities who may also benefit from mini-courses in study skills, assertiveness training, and time management. Students should try out various accommodations that have proven successful to others, among which are included:

- listening to a tape recording of written material while reading it;
- using extended time to complete exams (usually time and a half);
- using a computer to write exams or papers; and
- taking the exam in a quiet place.

Colleges and universities are not required to alter admissions requirements, nor are they required to alter programmatic requirements for students with learning disabilities once they have been admitted. If the course in question is found to be an essential element to the student's course of study or degree, it is unlikely that a waiver or a substitution will be granted. Accommodative services are not to be used in a way that would lower established academic standards.

The following tips may aid adults with learning disabilities as they prepare for college:

- Consider internships, part-time jobs, or volunteer service that will develop necessary skills.
- Consider enrolling in a summer pre-college program designed for students with learning disabilities, which may be available at a community college.
- Visit campuses, preferably while classes are in session, or talk by telephone with the staff of the Disability Support Services Office or the learning disabilities program to get an impression of campus daily life.
- Contact the local Vocational Rehabilitation agency, which may offer a variety of services to eligible students with learning disabilities, including vocational assessment, tuition assistance, or testing services.
- Explore sources of financing the college education. Although there is little scholarship money specifically for students with learning disabilities, readers are encouraged to

***Various accommodations which have proven successful may include:***

- ***listening to a tape recording of written material while reading;***
- ***using extended time to complete exams (usually time and a half);***
- ***using a computer to write exams or papers; and***
- ***taking the exam in a quiet place.***

review the HEATH resource paper, *Financial Aid for Students with Disabilities.*

- Join one of the national organizations that provide support not only to adults with learning disabilities but also to professionals. Participation in these organizations is an excellent way to build confidence, increase disability awareness and disability-related knowledge, and get information about special programs and resources.

Increasing numbers of people with learning disabilities are enrolling in colleges and universities. Since 1985, among first-time, full-time freshmen who reported having any disability, the percentage of those with learning disabilities has doubled from 15 percent to 32 percent.

***Since 1985, among first-time, full-time freshmen who reported having any disability, the percentage of those with learning disabilities has doubled from 15% to 32%.***

Awareness of one's strengths, advocacy skills, and persistence are among the most important tools for building a future through education. People with learning disabilities may maximize their chances of success by getting appropriate support, continually assessing their growth, and carefully planning their future. Anyone with learning disabilities who is considering college should be encouraged to pursue this goal. ❖

***Anne Reamer*** *is Research Associate for the HEATH Resource Center. Her areas of focus and interest include adult education and specialized topics related to students with disabilities in higher education. Ms. Reamer will soon receive her M.A. in community counseling from The George Washington University.*

## The National ALLD Center Homepage

The National ALLD Center now has a homepage on the National Institute for Literacy's LINCS WWW site at:

**http://novel.nifl.gov**

***What you'll find:***

- Information on the National ALLD Center
- National ALLD Center Publications
- Postings from the NIFL-ALLD Listserv
- Stories from students as told to Archie Willard
- Links to Other LD Resources



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# Transition To Work

*By Arlyn Roffman*

Making the transition into the work world is a critical step in human development, because it heralds an entree into independent adulthood. For the individual with learning disabilities (LD), this transition is fraught with obstacles related to academic and/or social skill deficits. Nonetheless, success is achievable under the right conditions and with appropriate supports.

How can literacy practitioners help adults with LD make this transition into the world of work? First, it is imperative that you help them develop a sense of themselves and the strengths they could bring to a job. Adults with LD need help focusing on realistic career goals, a multi-step process, which you can facilitate by:

- directing them to career fairs, where they can hear about a range of employment options and meet with employers to learn more about specific job requirements;
- arranging volunteer or part-time work experiences, where adults with LD may engage in internships or perhaps "job shadowing," which is following a worker through his or her day to achieve a full understanding of the scope of that position;
- forming job clubs, where they can learn goal setting and other self-determination skills, establish peer support networks, and practice interpersonal skills needed for work and community life;
- arranging for comprehensive assessment of their career awareness, vocational interests and aptitudes, learning styles, values, and attitudes toward work as a first step to finding an appropriate job match;
- directing adults with LD to their local office of Vocational Rehabilitation (VR) to determine eligibility for services. If they are eligible, an Individualized Written Rehabilitation Program (IWRP) will be established to set goals, identify services, and ultimately evaluate whether those goals have been met. Further, VR may provide assessment, vocational counseling, and job placement services at no charge to the client; and
- helping adults with LD develop a true understanding of their learning disability, knowledge of their strengths along with their weaknesses, and the ability to communicate these to others. We must work hard to ensure that adults in transition will be able to self-advocate for needed accommodations on the job.

Once adults have narrowed down the vocational options and have set an appropriate career goal, it is important that they develop the range of skills necessary to apply for and keep a job. You can assist by:

- focusing on the importance of work-related literacy skills. Along with general skills, such as how to read and fill out a job application, adults with LD will need help acquiring any specific reading and writing skills required for the newly acquired position;
- teaching job-search skills to enable adults with LD to develop the competencies to locate appropriate employment. They should be able to independently read newspaper want ads, fill out applications, compose a resume, interview effectively, and fill out W-4 and other work-related forms;

- addressing any noted social skills deficits, teaching more appropriate social behaviors that will help them *maintain* employment. Many adults with learning disabilities are challenged by social skills deficits along with literacy concerns. To successfully make the transition into the work world, they will need assistance to develop an understanding of nonverbal communication, to expand their general social awareness, and to hone their social problem solving skills (see Linkages, Vol. 2, No. 2, 1995, for in-depth discussion of this topic); and
- making individuals with learning disabilities aware of their rights under the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA), P.L. 101-336, so they may work to their fullest potential with any necessary accommodations.

You can further assist in the transition process by communicating your own belief in their ability to be successful in the work world. After struggling in the academic arena, their self-confidence may well be diminished, and they can greatly benefit from any reassurance you can offer about their potential for successfully obtaining and maintaining employment.

***You can further assist in the transition process by communicating your own belief in their ability to be successful in the work world.***

Thus, there is much you can do to facilitate this major life step, the transition into employment. Supports such as those listed above will enable the adult with LD to enter the work world with fuller self-understanding, stronger academic and social skills, greater confidence, and much-enhanced potential for success. ❖

***Dr. Arlyn Roffman*** *is a Professor of Special Education at Lesley College in Cambridge, Massachusetts, where she served as the founding director of the Threshold Program (for young adults with LD) from 1981-1996. A licensed psychologist, she also maintains a private practice, which focuses on social skills. Dr. Roffman is the author of numerous articles on learning disabilities. She is a member of the Advisory Board of the National Center for Learning Disabilities and several other organizations and has consulted on special education-related issues both throughout the U.S. and abroad.*

# Developing Workplace Skills

***By Robert Crawford***

The Life Development Institute (LDI), in Phoenix, Arizona, is a community-based program in a residential setting that assists individuals with learning disabilities to gain skills to be workplace literate, develop careers through competitive employment commensurate with capabilities, and attain independent status. LDI conducts two two-year programs for adolescents and adults, aged 16 and older. One focuses on secondary education, and the other focuses on post-secondary literacy, social skills, and job placement.

LDI has contracts with the Rehabilitation Services Administration, Administration for Children, Youth and Families, and it accommodates private referrals from a variety of sources. Extensive interagency linkages with area employers, adult education providers, the community college system, and state agencies are used by the LDI to facilitate holistic service provision for program participants.

LDI program participants are housed in a complex of 44, two-bedroom, two-bath apartments located in a central Phoenix middle-class, culturally diverse neighborhood. The facility is a unique residential setting that provides program participants with the opportunity to live in an apartment community with a minimum of staff supervision and a moderate amount of structure. LDI is part of the community, not an "island." The usual limiting factor of most residential training situations is that they are "sheltered" or "institutional" in their orientation. At LDI, the setting is an actual apartment complex and not a dormitory, institutional setting, or group home.

The mission of the LDI is to provide older adolescents and adults with learning disorders and literacy problems with workplace literacy skills and the ability to make appropriate choices. This allows them to compete in the global job market, thereby achieving an enhanced quality of life.

The LDI definition of workplace literacy is the necessary basic academic skills that can be applied in the functional context of the job. Workplace literate students demonstrate abilities in communications, problem solving, decision making, anger control, and developing team work skills.

To facilitate the goals of the program, mission-based teams of students are formed. These teams organize their efforts around project-driven activities that are compatible with the overall mission of the program. For example, a major goal of the program is to secure mainstream competitive employment commensurate with individual capabilities. A vocational research project is conducted to obtain necessary background information that would enable a program participant to make an informed decision regarding necessary education, training, and employment steps that are part of a career path.

As more and more employers and college officers require applicants to *show* what they *know* and *can do*, it becomes important that students know how to build a transition portfolio that showcases their abilities. When building a transition portfolio, the students take responsibility for assessing and evaluating the progres-

sion of their skills and capabilities. They must demonstrate the following seven levels of mastery for each featured skill:

(1) I know this;

(2) I can do this with help;

(3) I can explain or discuss this;

(4) I can break this into parts;

(5) I know when to use this;

(6) I can see life application for this; and

(7) I appreciate this.

They must demonstrate, or *show off,* their mastery either by obtaining written documentation, demonstrating the skill in a role-playing situation, or orally defending their knowledge. A transition portfolio enables them to show what they *know* and *can do*.

Working on the portfolio will help prepare each student for employment and advanced training. While building the portfolio, they will have many opportunities to learn about careers in a chosen field; collect work samples; practice job-related skills; and improve many academic skills such as writing and research.

Using a variety of assessments, instructional methods, and team approaches that center around unifying themes and that are project-driven allows the individual to competently identify his/her vocational preferences and work abilities and to develop plans to achieve successful postsecondary training and competitive employment.

The key ingredient in achieving successful outcomes using these approaches is the linkage of *learning to know* with *learning to do*. The end result of LDI programs is providing multiple opportunities to practice and become proficient in finding the right niche for each student. This is done by developing an educational, training, and employment curriculum that matches the individual's expressed career interest, presenting abilities, and deficits, matched to available local resources. ❖

*Robert Crawford is President and Co-Founder of the Life Development Institute (LDI). LDI is recognized nationally for its exemplary literacy program for adults with learning and literacy disorders and was a recipient of a coveted Presidential Points of Light Award.*

**LINKAGES** is published semi-annually. Individual copies may be obtained free of charge from the National ALLD Center by calling (800) 953-2553.

This material is based on work supported by the National Institute for Literacy under Grant No. X257B30002. Any opinions, findings, and conclusions or recommendations expressed in this material are those of the author(s) and do not necessarily reflect the views of the National Institute for Literacy. This information is in the public domain unless otherwise indicated. Readers are encouraged to copy and share the newsletter but are asked to credit the National ALLD Center. Comments and suggestions for **LINKAGES** are welcomed. Ideas and feedback may be shared with Center staff through letters to the Editor.

## Working Toward Independence

***By Grant Rayburn***

I was diagnosed with learning disabilities in 1982. I had a difficult time with low self-esteem, and I could only see what I *couldn't* do. Yet, I knew I wanted to become independent of my parents, and that was all the drive I needed to consider Life Development Institute (LDI) as a place to achieve that goal.

I arrived at LDI in September of 1994. I did not know quite what to expect. The first twelve weeks, I went through classes in interviewing, job development, effective communication, practical economics, social skills, and apartment maintenance. These classes made a tremendous difference in my self-esteem. I took a challenging English course at Phoenix Community College. I was fearful that this was going to turn out just like all those other college courses that I had enrolled in before but took an incomplete in because of failing grades. I ended up earning a 4.0 in the English class. The tutoring and structure that LDI provides its students made it possible for me to excel. I was shocked, and my parents were pleasantly surprised as well.

I held two jobs during 1995 and 1996. At the first job, I worked as a pre-board screener at the Skyharbor Airport. The company that employed me lost its contract in September and gave me a choice either to get on the new company's payroll or to resign. I decided to ride the contract out and then seek employment elsewhere. I interviewed for a part-time job at Ontario Aircraft Service and was accepted. I loaded and unloaded cargo from planes for United Parcel Service.

Around the same time, I was attending an occupational investigation class at LDI. The class was on research into careers and schools. The school I chose was Bryman School; I liked its support system. At first, my career interest was X-ray technician. I enrolled, got my books, and, on my first day of school, asked myself, "Is this the career path I really want to pursue?" The answer came during the latter portion of that first class. I knew that I could complete the work; however, a little voice inside me said, "Wait, research a couple of other possibilities before you commit." I knew that I could always re-enroll in the next module.

So I decided to check out another path: optical. I sat through an optical class to shadow the students and ask questions. I found out that the optical field had a lot more pros for me than the X-ray field, the biggest one being that it is a much more socially oriented career. I enrolled the next week. The class was smooth sailing, and I never had any regrets. I attended six modules, one month each.

At the end of the sixth module, I started my externship at Handilab. I gained a lot of hands-on knowledge there, both in the lab and in the office. My externship ended in November, at which time I took a break to go home for Christmas. When I returned, I received my diploma in the mail.

The job placement center at Bryman had 11 job leads for me to check out. I got a job after interviewing at The National Vision Center. The job is everything I imagined it would be; I am able to implement everything I learned at Bryman plus take advantage of cross-training in new areas. The money is more than what I had expected, and, after my ninety-day probationary period, I plan to move to Peoria, Arizona, to be closer to work. ❖

***Grant Rayburn** currently lives in Phoenix, Ariz.*



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# ORGANIZATIONS

**Association on Higher Education And Disability (AHEAD)**
P. O. Box 21192
Columbus, OH 43221
(614) 488-4972

Association on Higher Education and Disability (AHEAD) is an international, multicultural organization of professionals committed to full participation in higher education for persons with disabilities. The Association offers numerous training programs, workshops, publications, and conferences.

**HEATH Resource Center**
National Clearinghouse on Postsecondary Education for Individuals with Disabilities
American Council on Education
One Dupont Circle, NW, Suite 800
Washington, DC 20036-1193
202-939-9320
202-833-4760 (fax)

HEATH serves as an information exchange for the educational support services, policies, procedures, adaptations, and opportunities of American campuses, vocational-technical schools, adult education programs, and other training entities after high school. The Center collects and disseminates this information so that people with disabilities can develop their full potential through postsecondary education and training.

**Job Accommodation Network (JAN)**
West Virginia University
918 Chestnut Ridge Road
P. O. Box 6080
Morgantown, WV 26506
(304) 293-7186 (V/TTY)
(800) 232-9675 (V/TTY)

JAN is an international toll-free consulting service that provides information about job accommodations and the employability of people with functional limitations. It provides information about employment issues to employers, rehabilitation professionals, and persons with disabilities. Callers should be prepared to explain their specific problem and job circumstances. Sponsored by the President's Committee on Employment of People with Disabilities, the Network is operated by West Virginia University's Rehabilitation Research and Training Center. Brochures, printed materials, and a newsletter are available free of charge.

**President's Committee on Employment of People with Disabilities**
1331 F Street, NW
Washington, DC 20004-1107
(202) 376-6200
(202) 376-6205 (TTY)

The President's Committee on Employment of People with Disabilities is an independent federal agency. The committee's mission is to facilitate the communication, coordination, and promotion of public and private efforts to empower Americans with disabilities through employment. The committee offers several publications that address aspects of employment for adults with LD including *Pathways to Employment for People with Learning Disabilities* and *Employment Considerations for Learning Disabled Adults*. Both are free.

# Selected Readings

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The National ALLD Center thanks the following individuals for reviewing and contributing to this newsletter: Susan Green, Program Officer/Liaison, National Institute for Literacy; Ivan Charner, Vice President and Director, National Institute for Work and Learning, Academy for Educational Development; Bryna Shore Fraser, Deputy Director, National Institute for Work and Learning, Academy for Educational Development; Neil Sturomski, President, Sturomski & Associates; Vickie Barr, Assistant Director, HEATH Resource Center; and Lisa Küpper, Publications Coordinator, National Information Center for Children and Youth with Disabilities, Academy for Educational Development.

**The Academy for Educational Development**

The Academy for Educational Development, founded in 1961, is an independent, nonprofit service organization committed to addressing human development needs in the United States and throughout the world. Under contracts and grants, the Academy operates programs in collaboration with policy leaders; nongovernmental and community-based organizations; governmental agencies; international multilateral and bilateral funders; and schools, colleges, and universities. In partnership with its clients, the Academy seeks to meet today's social, economic, and environmental challenges through education and human resource development; to apply state-of-the art education, training, research, technology, management, behavioral analysis, and social marketing techniques to solve problems; and to improve knowledge and skills throughout the world as the most effective means for stimulating growth, reducing poverty, and promoting democratic and humanitarian ideals.

**The National ALLD Center**

The National ALLD Center, funded by the National Institute for Literacy, promotes awareness about the relationship between adult literacy and learning disabilities. Through its national information exchange network and technical assistance training, the National ALLD Center helps literacy practitioners, policymakers, and researchers better meet the needs of adults with learning disabilities. We encourage your inquiries and will either directly provide you with information or refer you to an appropriate resource.

**The National Institute for Literacy**

The National Institute for Literacy is an independent federal agency jointly administered by the U.S. Departments of Education, Labor, and Health and Human Services. The Institute's primary goals are to provide leadership and coordination for literacy activities across federal agencies and among states, enhance the knowledge base for literacy, and create a national communications system that links the literacy field nationwide.

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